

The
Gutenberg
Bible



caecum
in illi scriptor
mis affirmat.
obie et macha
eos ecclesie. sed
as non recipit:
a legat ad edi
autoritatem
firmandam.

procurantur
domus ueras spolijs.
biscum. marsupium sit
nunc: filii mi ne ambu
habe pedem tuu a sem
en illor; ad malu cur
effundant lagunem.
iacit rite ante oculos
contra sanguinem suu



ISBN 0-87328-169-1

9 780873 281690

51195



The
Gutenberg
Bible



THE EARLIEST
PORTRAIT OF JOHANN GUTENBERG

*This engraving,
presumably an imaginary likeness,
shows a man with a forked beard and
a furred cap, with a die of twelve letters
of the alphabet in his left hand. It first
appeared in a book by André Thevet,
Paris, 1584.*

The
Gutenberg
Bible

Landmark in Learning

James Thorpe

→ HUNTINGTON LIBRARY ♀

SAN MARINO, CALIFORNIA



© Copyright 1999

Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery

First Edition, paper, 1975

Second Edition, cloth, 1999

All rights reserved

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS CATALOGING
IN PUBLICATION DATA

Thorpe, James Ernest, 1915– The Gutenberg Bible:
Landmark in Printing / by James Thorpe.

p. cm. ISBN: 0-87328-169-1

i. Gutenberg Bible

2. Incunabula—Germany—Mainz (Rhineland Palatinate)

3. Printing—Germany—Mainz (Rhineland Palatinate)

History—Origin and antecedents. I. Title.

Z240.B58T47 1998 093 dc21 97-38308

CIP

Back Cover Detail:

ILLUMINATED INITIAL "P" AND MARGINAL DECORATIONS
BEGINNING OF THE BOOK OF PROVERBS, OLD TESTAMENT

Above:

ILLUMINATED INITIAL "T".

BEGINNING OF THE BOOK OF LAMENTATIONS, OLD TESTAMENT

Front Cover and Contents page:

ILLUMINATED INITIAL "M".

ILLUSTRATING AN ANGEL, THE SYMBOL OF MATTHEW
NEW TESTAMENT • PROLOGUE TO THE BOOK OF MATTHEW

Pages 7-8

ILLUMINATED INITIAL "T" AND MARGINAL DECORATIONS
BEGINNING OF THE BOOK OF 1 KINGS, OLD TESTAMENT

The body text is Adobe Minion,
a typeface designed by Robert Slimbach.
Minion is inspired by classical, oldstyle typefaces of the
late Renaissance, a period of highly readable type designs.

The display type on the cover and title pages
is Monotype Truesdell, the 47th typeface of F.W. Goudy.

The original font was destroyed in a fire but this
digitized version was created by Steve Matteson in 1993
using Goudy's original letterpress proofs.

Printed in Singapore by C.S. Graphics on 170 gsm Multi-art silk.



CONTENTS

I. Introduction

9

II. The Emergence of Printing and the Gutenberg Bible

17

III. The Gutenberg Bible Today

35

IV. Henry E. Huntington's Copy of the Gutenberg Bible

41

libros dūisus ē. **N**omus h̄ester. Atq; ita fūt p̄ter vetus legis libri vīgīnīduo: id ē mōsi quīq; et xp̄haz oīto: agio ḡphor̄ nouē. **N**uamq; nō nulli rūch: et cūoth ince agiographa scrip-ticū. et h̄ps libros i suo pūtū nūmeo sup̄rādōs: ac p̄ hoc esse p̄s̄ta legis libros vīgīnīquod quos sub nūme-ro vīgīnīquatuor sēmīor̄ apocalip̄s̄ ioh̄ia iudicāt. adorantes agnū. et corona sūas p̄strātā vulcib; offereb; flāmib; corā q̄tuor aīalib; oculatis ante et retro id est in p̄tūtū et in futur; respicētib; et in defella voce clamātib; sandus. sc̄. sc̄. dñs deus omnī-potens. qui erat. et qui est. et qui vētur̄ est. **H**ic p̄logus scripturae: quasi ga-leatū p̄nūpū. dñib; libris quos de hebreo vīnū i latīnū couenire potest: ut sc̄re valeam̄ quīq; q̄tra hos est. inter apocrapha ēē ponendū. **I**gitur sapīa q̄ vulgo salomois inscribit. et ihū filij scrach lib̄. et iudith. et thobias. et pastor nō sūt i canone. **M**achaboez p̄mū libru. hebraicū r̄pt̄. **S**ōs gr̄c̄ ē: qd̄ q̄ ip̄a ph̄ras̄ p̄bari potest. Que tū ita se habeāt: obsecro te lector. ne la-borem̄ meū rephēnsionē cūm̄ amī-quor̄. In r̄plo dñi. offert uniusquisq; qd̄ potest. Alij aut̄ et argenti et lapi-des p̄c̄os̄o: alij bīllū et purpuram et torcū offereb; et iacutū. Nobisfū bene agitur: si obrulerim̄ pelles et caprae pilos. Et tamē apls̄ d̄c̄npt̄abiliora n̄ra magis necessaria iudicat. Unde et tota illa tabernac̄lī pulchrudo. et p̄ singlas species ecclie p̄nīs. futuręq; distinco p̄llib; regit et alīq; ardoreq; solis. et iniuriā vībrū. ea q̄ vīli-va sūt. ph̄ib̄et. **L**ege ergo p̄mū samuel-

et malachīm meū. **N**eu inquā m̄? Quānd̄ enī celeb̄tus uerendo. et anga-dando sollicatus. et didicim̄ et reue-nēm̄ ē. Et tū i intellexis qd̄ antea nob̄ bas. us̄ interpretan̄ me effūmato li gra-es: us̄ parafrasten̄ si ingratius: quād̄ m̄tch̄ omīno p̄leua nō sum. mutus me q̄ppiā de hebraicā veritat. **S**i incredulus es. lege grecos codicos latīnos. et afer tū h̄is opūsculis q̄ nū emēauim̄: et ubiq; dīscēpare uite se uideris. interrogā quēlibet hebreo cui magis accommodare debet. et si nostra firmauerit. puto qd̄ eu n̄ estimes d̄ectoran̄: ut i eodē loco met-sūtē dūmūtarit. **S**ed et vos familiē xp̄i rogo q̄ dñi dūcūtēs p̄c̄os̄ fidēi mītra vīgīnīs caput. q̄ inqui saluatorē queritis i sepulchro. quād̄ iā ad p̄m̄ xp̄e astēdir: ut ora latē res canēs. qui aduersi me rabido debruīnt. et circueb; ciuitatē. atq; m̄le dōctōs arbitrant̄ si alīs dīctiōnō orationum uēar̄ clippōs opponant̄. **E**go sc̄iens humilitatē m̄c̄. ill̄ s̄p̄ leuitatē recordabor. **D**ixi custodia vias meas: ut nō delinqua i lungi-meā. Posui ori meo custodiā: ni colistet peccator adūlū me. **O**bmut̄ et humūlīar̄ sūr̄: et silū de bonis.

Ancipit p̄m̄ libri regū capituli p̄

Vit vir uniu de
martham sop̄ib
de mōte eph̄as
et nomē eī h̄od
ua-filius iherob
filii breui. filii ch
filii sup̄. escatus: et habuit du
ores: nomē vīnā amma: et nomē
faranna. futuręq; feranne filii: am-



ut uero mā liberū. Et ascendebat vīr
de nūtare sua stanus dībz: ut a
comitū et sanctū caret dīo regnū in
suo. Nam autē ibi duo filii heli: oīnū
sanctores dīi. Vīr ergo dībz
incolam hēlchana. deditq; faciem
vīrū sūc et oīdīs filio cīus et filiabz
pīm. Anna autem dedit partē unā
qua annam diligebat. Dīs
adūstac vīluā ei⁹. Affligebat
vīrū amula aura: et uchenīter an-
gōcimānū ut reprobarat q; dīs
adūstac vīluā curs. Hīc; faciēbat
anglos ānos. cūq; redire q; ascē-
tū ad cōplū dīi: et sūc pīocabat cā.
Poco illa abebat: et nō capiebat abū.
Dīg; a hēlchana vīrū lūnū. Anna
q; nō comedis: et quā obre
q; mīrū tu nū? Nūq; nō ego melior
quā dīcē filiū. Surrexit autem
ma: postq; comedērat et biberat in
sua. Et hēl sacerdotē sedēt sup sellā
ne pītē dom⁹ dīi. cū esset anna
amato amato. orauit ad dīm fles
in vīru uōur dīcēta. Dīc; q;
vīru hēspīas vīdais afflictionā
familiū ut: et recordat⁹ ma fūtis nec
vīru amolle tue. dedicisq; secue tue
cū vīlē dato cū dīo omibz dībz
vīrū: et noua clā nō ascēdet sup
caput tue. Fātū est autē cū illa infi-
līat̄ pīra vīrā dīo: ut hēl obser-
vat̄ os aīta. Poco anna loqueta
et cōte suo tānūq; labia cīus moue-
bant̄. et vox pīntū nō audiebatur.
Hēl autē ergo eam hēl tāmula: et
dīcēt̄. Vīlē quo vīra tēs? Dīcē
pītē vīlē quo māres. Responēs
anna. uīlē q; mīrū dīe mī. Nā nū-
pīlē māris ergo sum: vīlēq; et

omē q; iubrīare pīest non bībi. sed
effudi animā meā in cōspā dīi. Ne
repates aītālā tuā q;li vīuā de filiabz
bētāl. quia q; multitudine doloris: et
meroris ma locuta sū usq; i presens.
Tunc hēl aīt a. Vade in pace. et deus
iscl̄ dīt̄ cībī pīcōnan tuā quā rogasti
eū. At illa dīxit. Hītā inueniat au-
tālla tua gradā i dūllīs tuā. Et abīt̄
mūlēt̄ i vīfā suā et comedit vīltūs q;
illī nō sūt̄ aplūs i dīuerla mutat̄.
Et surrexēt̄ manē: et adorauit̄
coram dīo: reuersiq; sūt̄ et vīnerūt̄ i n
domū suā ramathā. Lognouit̄ autē
hēlchana annā uxore suā: et recordar
est ei⁹ dīi. Et fātū ē post cīculū dīcē.
cōcīpit anna: et pēpet̄ filiū. vocauit̄q;
nomē eius samuel: eo q; a dīo postu-
lāt̄ eū. Adēdit autē vīr ei⁹ hēlchana
et oīs dom⁹ a⁹. ut īmolaret dīo hēlchana
solemē. et votū lūnū: et anna nō ascē-
dit̄. Dīxit cū vīro suo. Non vadām
donec ablādetur infans: et dūcā eū ut
apparēat ante cōspectū dīi. et maneat
ibi iugū. Et aīt a hēlchana vīrū suā.
Fāc quod bonū abī vīderūt̄: et manē
donec ablādetur eū pīorg; ut īpleat̄
dīs verbū tūnū. Mansit ergo mūlēt̄
et lātāt̄ filiū sūt̄: donec amoueret̄
eū a lātē. Et adduxit eū secū postq; ab-
lātāt̄ in vītūlīs tībz et tībz mā-
dīs farīne: et aphīora vītū: et adduxit̄
eū ad domū dīi i sylo. Pīer autem
erat adhuc infantulus. Et īmolau-
runt vītūlū: et obnūt̄ pītē hēl. Et
aīt̄ anna. Obsecro nū dīe. vīnūt̄ aīa
tua dīe. Ego sum illa māler que stēt̄
vīrā te hēl. orās dīm pro pītē isto.
Orauerat dēdīt̄ mālī dīs pīcōnan
mās quā postulauit̄ eū. Id dīcō et ego

uag; sequeremur si antea cognouisse
mus. Sic autē vos de genitū nobili-
tate iactans: quasi nō mortuū imitato-
magis q̄ carnalis natuāris filios
vos faciat esse sanctoru. Deniq; esau
i s̄mūat̄ cū te p̄sp sine abrata: min-
ime tamen in filios reputant̄. H̄is ca-
lere altercantiib; apostolus se mediu-
metponens: ita p̄tū dicitur questio-
nes: ut neutrū eoz sua iustitia salutē
metuſe cōfitemet: ambos vero p̄tos
et sc̄m̄t̄ et graueret deliquisse: iudic̄
q̄ p̄t̄ p̄uariationē legia d̄eū intona-
rauerint: gentes vero q̄ cū cognitū di-
creature creatorū ut d̄eū debetur ve-
nerari: gloriā eius in manu facta mu-
tauerint simulacra: ut v̄losq; etiā simili-
t̄ uenā rōsecut̄. equalita t̄s uera-
cissima ratione demonstrat̄: p̄secum-
tum in radē lege p̄dītum: iudic̄os et
gentes ad c̄st̄ fidem vocandoſ ille
ostendit. Quamobrem viciſſim eos
humilians: ad pacem et concordia-
m̄ cohorteſ. explicit prolog⁹ sp̄ci-
alis. Inipit prologus tertius.

Romanū lūr pars realie.
In p̄nūtū hunc a fallia
apostoliſ: et sub nomine
d̄ni nostri ihesu c̄st̄ in le-
gen⁹ p̄p̄eras trām̄ induit̄. Hos re-
uocat̄ ap̄lus ad uerā et nā grēcā h̄d̄
sc̄lēs et a corīta. Explicit prolog⁹. In-
cipit ep̄la b̄i pauli ap̄li ad Roman⁹.

Aulus seruus ihesu
c̄st̄. vocat̄ apl̄us
legregatus in euā-
gelio d̄i: q̄d̄ āre pro-
mis̄c̄t̄ p̄t̄ p̄p̄eras
suis i scripturis san-
ctis de filio suo: qui factus ē et se-
nōne dāuid sc̄m̄ carī: qui p̄destinat̄
est filius d̄i in virtute sc̄m̄ spiritum

sanctificationis et resūratione mor-
tuorum ihesu c̄st̄ d̄i n̄t̄: q̄ quē accipi-
mus granā et apostulatu ad obedie-
dum fidēi in omnibus p̄t̄bus pro no-
mine n̄t̄: in quib; elis et uos uocan̄
ihesu c̄st̄: omnibus qui sūc com-
m̄ilat̄s d̄i uocata sanctis. Sancta vo-
bis et p̄z a deo parte et d̄no n̄t̄ ihesu
c̄st̄. Primiū quidē granas ago deo
meo p̄t̄ ihesu c̄st̄ pro omnib; vobis:
quia fidēs uera annūciatur in univer-
so mundo. Letis enim multū est deus
cū seruio in sp̄itu meo in euāgeliō
filij n̄t̄: q̄ sine intermissione memori-
am uelut facio sem̄p in draconib; meis:
obsecras si quo modo tandem
aliquando, p̄sp̄cū tec̄ habeā in volū-
tate dei uenundi ab uos. Deflato mi-
videre uos: ut aliquid imperiā vo-
bis grēce spiritualis ad conformatiōnē
uos: id est simili consolati in vobis
p̄t̄ eam que iniiciem et fidem uelut
atq; meam. Molo aut̄ uos ignorare
fratres: q̄a lepe p̄posui uenire ad uos
et p̄hibit̄ sum usq; adhuc: ut aliq̄
sc̄dū habēa in vobis sicut et in ceteris
p̄t̄bus. Sicut ac barbaris sapienti-
bus et insipientib; debitor sum: nagi
q̄d̄ in me p̄mp̄t̄ ē et vobis qui come-
tis euāgeliā. Nō enī cubito
euāgeliū. Virtus enī dei est in salutē
omni credenti: iudeo primū et grec.
Iustitia enim dei ī eo ciuitatē ē ad
cēlo sup̄ om̄ē imperiā et in intellectu
hominiū: tor qui ueritate dei ī inuita-
da deiner: q̄a q̄d̄ nouē ē dei manifestū
est ī illis. Deus enī illis reuelauit. In-
visibilis enī ip̄st̄ a creature modū p̄t̄
ra q̄ facta sit intellexit colpīcūnt̄: leu-
picēa quoq; n̄s uerē et diuina;

ILLUMINATED INITIAL "P"
AND MARGINAL DECORATIONS
BEGINNING OF THE BOOK OF ROMANS

NEW TESTAMENT

INTRODUCTION

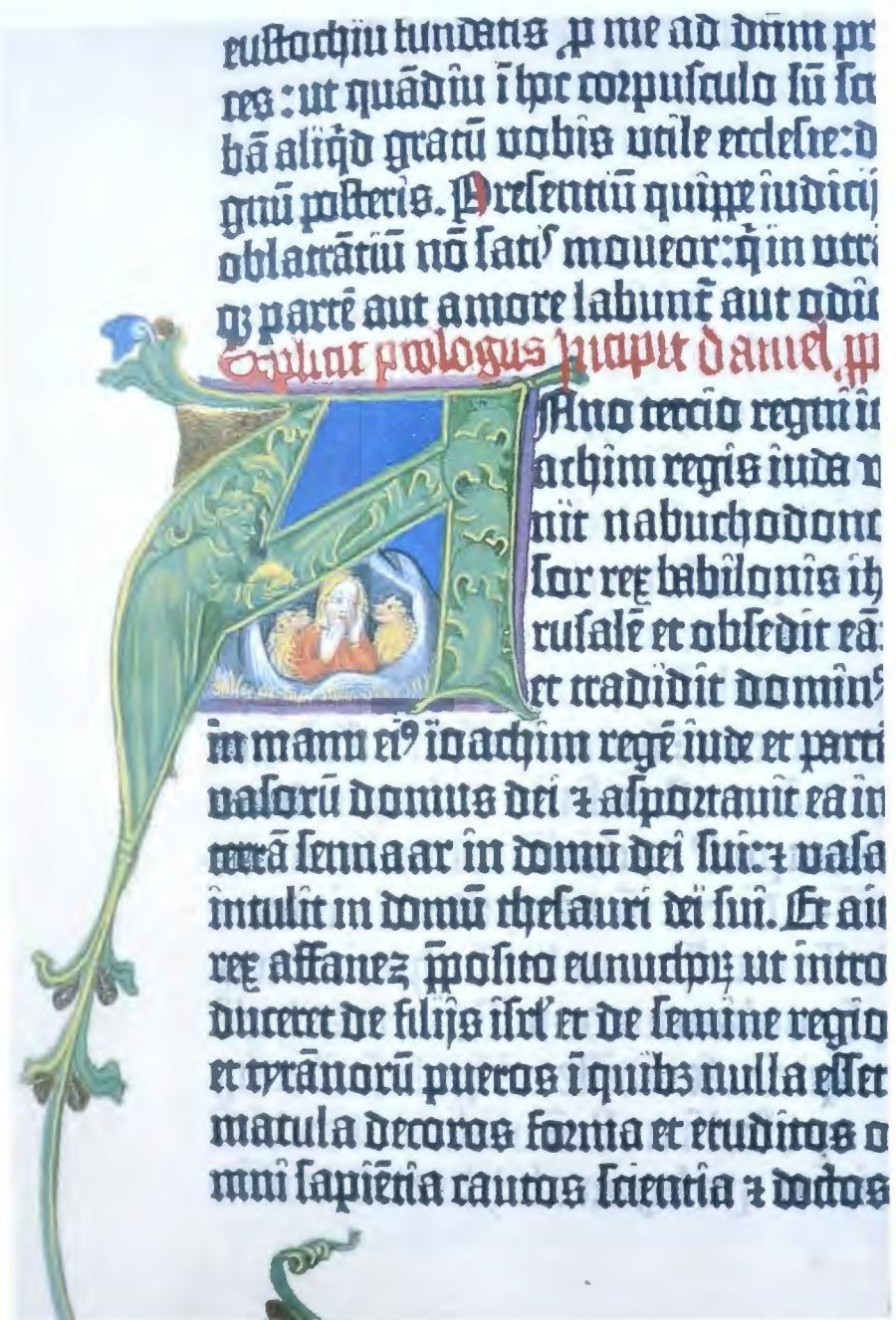
RARELY HAS fame ever been so well placed as that which surrounds the Gutenberg Bible. This noble book, which appeared about 1455, has long been taken to represent the invention of printing in the western world. In that role, it symbolizes one of the small handful of the greatest human accomplishments of all time. It can be considered along with such great ancient achievements as writing and numeration, along with such great modern achievements as the steam engine and the use of electricity. Sometimes the importance of an invention—or of any human act—lies in what it leads to. It can truly be said that the invention of printing from movable metal type, in Germany in the middle of the fifteenth century, led to a radical change in the whole world of the intellect. It is this great invention that we are considering through the symbol of a single book, the Gutenberg Bible. Let us first take a look at the consequences of this invention from the perspectives of people living in Europe in the middle of the fifteenth century.

Books were available, but their text was of course written by hand. Today we sometimes think that all books are printed, and that texts written by hand should be called manuscripts. So they may, but the term “book” existed long before printing, and its meanings include any set of leaves, whether written or printed, that are bound together. Before printing, the making of a book was a laborious process, full of chances for error. It might take one scribe a full year to copy a single long book. Consequently books were very scarce and very expensive, and they were full of mistakes that the copyist had inevitably made in the course of his work.

Libraries existed in only a few centers of learning. In England at that time the abbey libraries at Canterbury and Bury were among the largest, with some 2,000 books each, but the Cambridge University Library had only 300, and very few learned men had any books at all. The most common books were Bibles, collections of psalms, and other books for religious services, almost entirely in Latin; after these, the most numerous books were writings from classical antiquity.

Although books were scarce, education was much more widespread in the later Middle Ages than is sometimes supposed. By 1450, in some areas of England for which there is evidence, up to thirty or forty percent of the adults were literate—that is, they could read. Writing was something separate, taught as an artisan skill, like shoemaking, with the rest of the literate world left to scribble as best it could. Hence our feeling, from looking at their handwriting, that great writers and notable personages of those times must have been partially illiterate and therefore probably stupid—such is our vanity that we can always turn to our own advantage a comparison between ourselves and talented people of the distant past.

There were many kinds of schooling available in England in the middle of the fifteenth century, and most children could get at least a rudimentary education, whatever their social or financial condition. Grammar schools (for the fortunate few) offered the best education, and the rich had tutors for their children. But there was also a multitude of small and often informal parish schools taught by the clergy: the lesser clergy operated what were called chantry schools (associated with chapels for chanting masses), and even in tiny villages the priests or clerks taught the children of the parish. Learning was increasingly valued, and about this time the guilds of skilled artisans began to introduce minimum standards of education for membership. The Goldsmiths' Company, for example, passed a rule that no apprentice could be taken "without he can write and read."



ILLUMINATED INITIAL "A"
ILLUSTRATING DANIEL IN THE LIONS' DEN
OLD TESTAMENT • BOOK OF DANIEL

· ihu filij sirach liber: et ali⁹ phus. qui sapientia salo-
tibit. **N**uor⁹ priore hebra-
nō ecclasticiū ut apud la-
abolas p̄notatū. **C**ui nūdī
es. et canticū canticor⁹: ut
ē salomonis. nō solū nu-
ū: sed etiā materia⁹ gene-
t. **S**ecundus apud hebreos
iua et ipse filius grecam
dolet: et nōnulli scripro⁹
se iudei filonis affirmāt.
iudith ⁊ thobie ⁊ macha-
legit quidē eos ecclia. sed
cas scripturas nō recipit:
o volumina legat ad edi-
cēs: nō ad autoritatem
dogmatū afirmandam.

Audi fili mi disciplinā p
dimittas legem m̄ris tue
gracia capiti tuo: et corqu
Fili mi si te ladauerint pi
quiescas eis. **S**i dixerit u
misdicemur sanguini. absi
culas dtra insoutem frust
muis cū fructū inferius vi
grum. quasi descendēte in
preciosa substantia reprieus
domus n̄cas spolias. for
biscum. marsupium sit uo
rūm: fili mi ne ambules
h̄ibe pedem tuū a seminis
enī illor⁹ ad malū curvū:
efundant sanguinem. **F**r
iacit rite ante oculos pē
contra sanguine suū inl



MARGINAL DECORATIONS
BEGINNING OF THE BOOK OF PROVERBS
OLD TESTAMENT

The invention of printing provided books in abundance to serve the varieties of established schooling and to satisfy the hunger for learning. There was, in fact, a veritable explosion of books, an explosion heard around the western world. In the forty-five years after the Gutenberg Bible—through 1501, that is—more than ten million books had been printed, being copies of forty thousand different works. It would have taken all the copyists in Europe at least a thousand years to have turned out the books printed in those forty-five years. And that was only the merest beginning, the production of the years now called the incunable period, or the cradle of printing. When the invention outgrew its swaddling clothes, its effects really began to be felt. By 1501 there were 1,120 printing offices in 260 different towns in 17 European countries, and their output of printed books outran belief.

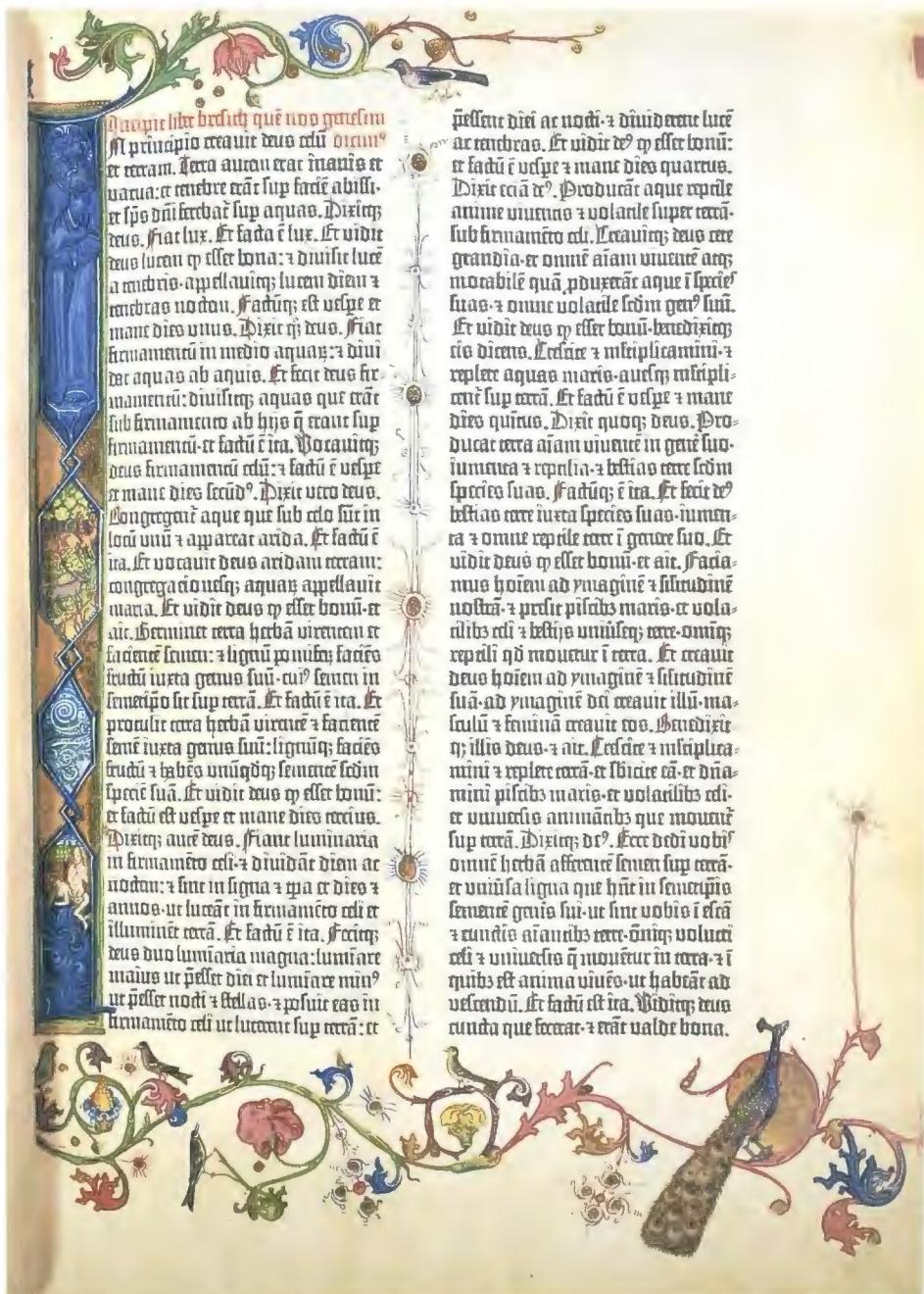
The result was a series of revolutions in learning, first, in the dissemination and increase of knowledge. Vastly more material became available for education in schools and for self-education. Earlier, teaching had been mainly oral; afterward, learning came mainly from reading. Those who were literate became very much more learned, and many achieved a depth of learning which only a few had ever before possessed. From this came an explosion of knowledge, the creation of new knowledge on a scale that had never before been imagined. Before then, the principal way of creating new knowledge had been through analysis of a limited number of authorities, primarily scripture and writings of classical antiquity. Free access to a greater body of knowledge was an important stimulant to creativity of other kinds, including experimental work. At the same time, the human intellect itself underwent a radical change in its adaptation to the demands of a very much greater body of knowledge and of new ways to deal with it, to use it, and to increase it.

The other revolution was a radical change in our social and political order as a result of a great increase in literacy. For a

time, the literacy rate changed only rather slowly after the invention of printing. Education (of which literacy is a simple symptom) has generally had, at least from a large body of English-speaking peoples, a mixed reaction of awe and suspicion, as a state to be admired from a safe distance. Literacy gradually increased, however, because of the availability of the printed book and thanks to some legal nudges. Probably about thirty or forty percent of the adults in England were literate in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, approximately sixty percent in the eighteenth century, and perhaps ninety percent in our own time. The tremendous consequences of the increase in literacy were that it made democracy possible on more than a local level, and that it led to a social ordering on the bases of education and intellectual achievement, in addition to the earlier bases of wealth and family position. Thus it was that the invention of printing had a mighty influence, in crucial ways, on the development of the world as we know it today.



ILLUMINATED INITIAL "P"
ILLUSTRATING ST. PAUL
NEW TESTAMENT • BOOK OF ROMANS



ILLUMINATED INITIAL "I"
 AND MARGINAL DECORATIONS ILLUSTRATING CREATION
 OLD TESTAMENT • BOOK OF GENESIS

THE EMERGENCE OF PRINTING AND THE GUTENBERG BIBLE

HOW DID THE invention of printing come to pass and how was the Gutenberg Bible produced? Most statements about the invention of printing are carefully limited to Europe and to movable type; these statements leave a considerable part of the globe unaccounted for and an indefinite number of other methods of printing unbespoken. Let me first indicate the reasons for these reservations.

The two historical methods of printing are block printing, and printing from movable type. In block printing, the outlines of words or pictures are carved on a block of wood, and an impression is made by inking the block and pressing a piece of paper (or vellum) on it. The disadvantages of block printing are numerous: the carving is very slow handwork, the outlines are relatively crude, the blocks wear out, and it is difficult to print from large blocks or from combinations of blocks. Printing from movable type involves placing individual letters or characters into lines (composing), adding lines until the desired page is full, and using a press to transfer ink to paper from a number of these pages at the same time. The advantages of printing from movable metal type were, at the outset, that it was fast, cheap, and clear; the type could be uniform, of any size desired, reusable, and capable of producing a relatively large number of impressions without wearing out.

Block printing existed before printing from movable type. The earliest dated European woodblock print is dated 1423; it is a picture, without words, of St. Christopher bearing the infant Christ. It is only a guess that wood-block printing was common in early times; all the extant European block books—blocks with

text, that is—seem to be slightly later than the Gutenberg Bible, and the method died in the sixteenth century.

The earliest printed book known is a ninth-century Chinese wood-block printing of the Diamond Sutra in the form of a roll sixteen feet long and one foot wide, made by pasting together the impressions from a series of wood blocks. There was considerable block printing in China. Marco Polo the wide-eyed traveler from Venice who visited China in the thirteenth century, tells of the marvelous Chinese printed money—black money on paper made from the bark of the mulberry tree, with the official seal on it in red ink. It was made by block printing. Probably Marco Polo's wonder lay mostly in the opportunity that the ruler thus had to produce unlimited wealth for himself, a possibility we still have with us, still called "printing press money."

It was in China also that we first hear of printing from movable type, in the eleventh century. The type was made of pieces of clay baked until hard, and the impression was taken by placing the paper on the type, apparently without the use of a press. (In Korea in the fifteenth century some type was made from copper and books were printed from it for a time.) The nature of the Chinese language inhibited the development of printing from movable type, however. Our basic alphabet has twenty-six characters, with constant repetition and hence both economy and manageability in reusing type. The Chinese language, with some forty thousand ideographs, was so ill-adapted to take advantage of movable type that printing never really developed in China in the early period. The Chinese experience had, in fact, no apparent influence on the invention of printing in Europe.

The Chinese invention that was influential, however, was paper making. By the end of the first century of the Christian era, the Chinese had developed the making of paper, using treebark, hemp, rags, even old fish nets. The alleged inventor was Ts'ai Lun, a eunuch at the court of the emperor. Ts'ai Lun met his end in a striking manner: when he could not find his way out of a squab-

Et nō erit mercator i
ngēnū in dīe illo. **C**
Ria mōpit mālachi



Ne frater etat esau iā
dilegi iacob: esau aū

ILLUMINATED INITIAL "O"
BEGINNING OF THE BOOK OF MALACHI
OLD TESTAMENT

III



ILLUMINATED INITIAL "C"
BEGINNING OF THE BOOK OF II CHRONICLES
OLD TESTAMENT

ble between himself, the empress, and the emperor's grandmother, he went home, took a bath, combed his hair, put on his best clothes, and drank poison! His invention reached the Near East in the eighth century and came to Europe, through Spain, in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

The availability of inexpensive paper was crucial to the development of printing. The other requirements were a suitable metal alloy that could be used for type, and a machine that would cast uniform metal type speedily. With this preamble, the stage is set for the introduction of Johann Gutenberg, the invention of printing, and the Gutenberg Bible.

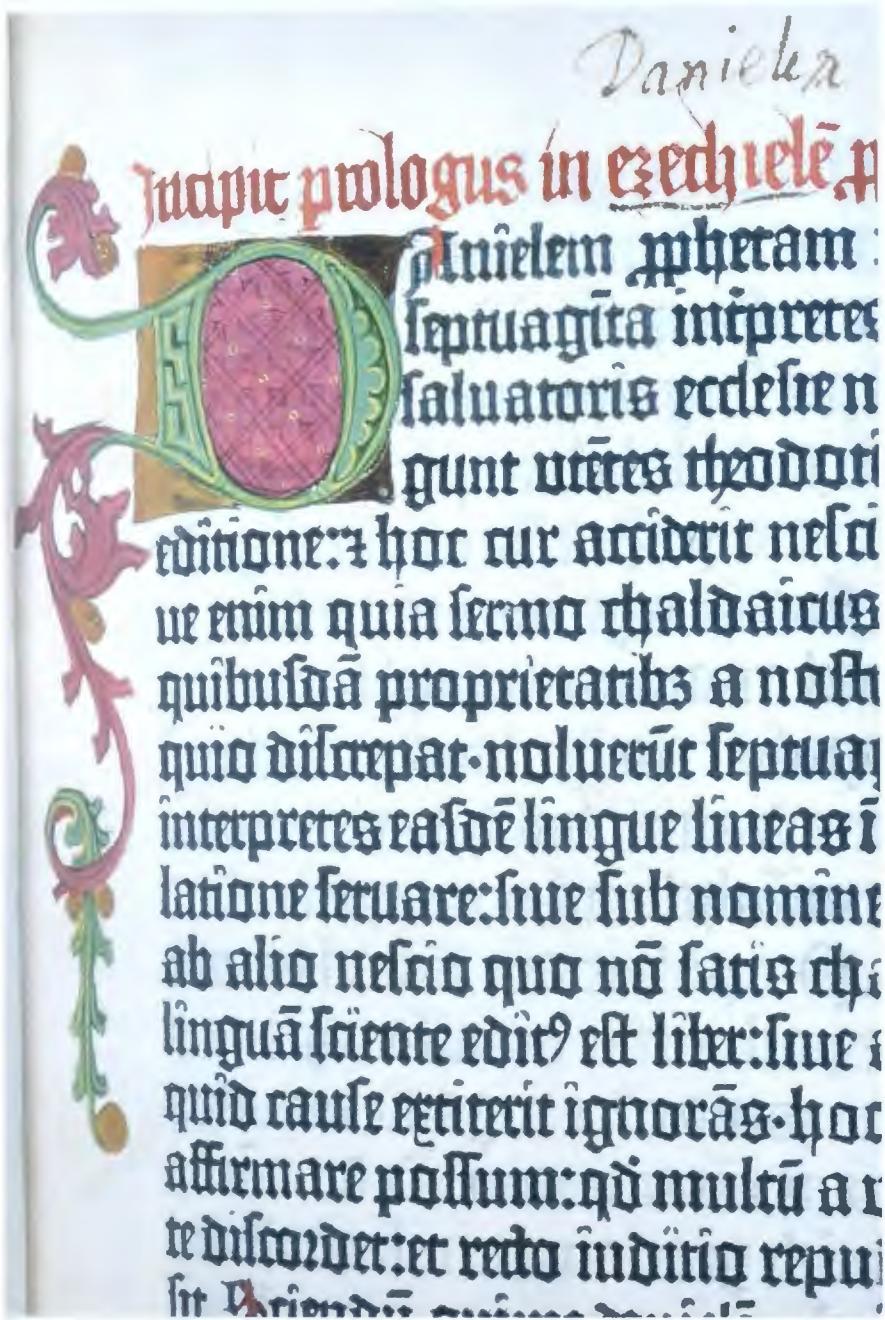
Our main sources of information on these subjects are twenty-eight legal documents which have been discovered in the course of the last five centuries. Several of them are lawsuits—unfortunately for Gutenberg, but fortunately for us, as even then lawsuits involved the recitation of background facts and the testimony of witnesses. Still, many matters about his life, about the invention of printing, and about the production of the book we call the Gutenberg Bible are far from clear, and there is room for dispute on large as well as small points. I will not explore those disputes but give a general account based on the primary documents and provide, for doubtful issues, the best scholarly consensus, so far as there is one. Learned men are no less contentious than the rest of the world, and small matters tend to rouse large passions.

Johann Gutenberg was born in the prosperous German city of Mainz, on the Rhine River, about the year 1399, or within the preceding five years. His family was formally classed, according to the ordering of the day, as "patrician," and they were prosperous, owning property and having income from annuities. Gutenberg was not content to live the usual life of a patrician, however. He seems to have been a restless man who probed into various new possibilities. He was something of a projector, bold and venturesome. He also had a strong will and a strong temper.

He early learned the craft of the goldsmith—though it was unusual for one in his social class to do so. When he was about twenty-nine, in 1428, Mainz was divided by a conflict between the artisans and the patricians. The artisans won, and Gutenberg had to go into exile; he went to Strasbourg, about a hundred and fifty miles up the Rhine.

There he moved in aristocratic circles and came to know a patrician woman named Ennelin zur Isernen Türe, and they planned to be married. Gutenberg apparently decided to back out, however, and the lady promptly brought suit against him for breach of promise. In the ecclesiastical court, a citizen named Claus Schott gave testimony against Gutenberg, which testimony (as the report went) “Gutenberg contradicted and rejected, declaring deponent to be a miserable wretch who lived by cheating and lying.” For these utterances, Schott brought another suit against Gutenberg for the use of defamatory language, and he received provisional damages. How the breach of promise suit came out, we do not know; but eight years later the lady was still unmarried, and Gutenberg appears to have remained a bachelor for the rest of his life.

It was in Strasbourg that Gutenberg's restless mind started him on a career as an inventor and manufacturer. He developed a method for polishing precious stones. He worked out a way to manufacture mirrors, at a time when mirrors were uncommon and expensive. His experiments were doubtless costly, both in materials and in establishing a shop with skilled workmen. So he went into partnership with two other people, who contributed large sums of money in return for being taught what Gutenberg called his “secret arts.” Their first plan was to make some special hand mirrors to sell to pilgrims going to Aachen (Aix-la-Chapelle) in 1439. When the pilgrimage was postponed for a year, the partners urged Gutenberg to teach them his other “secret art,” which may have been printing. But it may just as well have been related to his work with pilgrim's mirrors.



ILLUMINATED INITIAL "D" AND MARGINAL DECORATIONS
BEGINNING OF THE PROLOGUE TO THE BOOK OF DANIEL
OLD TESTAMENT



ILLUMINATED INITIAL "P"
ILLUSTRATING ST. PETER
NEW TESTAMENT • BOOK OF I PETER

When one of the partners died, Gutenberg entered into litigation rather than let someone else learn his "secret arts." Harsh words were passed between the partners. Gutenberg's servant complained that a partner accused him of lying and that the partner also (in the words of the suit) "shouted to me publicly: 'Listen, soothsayer, you must tell the truth for me, even if I should get upon the gallows with you'; and thus he maliciously accused and charged me with being a perjured villain, whereby he did me injustice before the grace of God, which surely are very evil things."

Such partnerships do not seem destined to last forever, and this one expired legally in 1443. In the next year, Gutenberg was able to return to Mainz after an absence of some fifteen years. I do not know whether he was able to take the contents of his wine cellar with him or not; if so, it was quite a move, as, according to the tax record, it contained some 420 gallons. He continued his work on printing in Mainz for the next dozen years, until 1455, when the printing of the Gutenberg Bible was completed.

Being an inventor can be impoverishing, and being an entrepreneur may be bankrupting, particularly when almost all the financial entries are on the outgo pages and virtually none on the income ones. Gutenberg had very ambitious plans, and he exhausted his own funds in the first few years of his enterprise; thereafter he had to embark on the risky course of borrowing money which he hoped to repay from the uncertain returns of an indefinite future. He was carrying the interest (at 5%) on a loan that he had made in 1442 from the Parish of St. Thomas in Strasbourg; in 1448 he borrowed 150 guilders in Mainz, using a relative as security; in 1450 he had to borrow the very large sum of 800 guilders (at 6% interest) from a lawyer-capitalist-goldsmit named Johann Fust in order "to finish the work." But in two years, that money was gone, too, and he went back to Fust for another 800 guilders; this time the prudent Fust insisted on becoming a partner in the enterprise in order to protect his investment.

In the meantime, the experiments with printing were going forward. Several fonts of type were designed, a metal alloy was developed, a machine to cast type was invented, ink was worked out from the formula for oil paint introduced for painting some twenty years before by Jan van Eyck, and the press was perfected. About a dozen different works from this experimental period have been identified—often in fragmentary form as waste paper found in the binding of other books—and it is assumed that they were done by Gutenberg or his associates. Perhaps the earliest one, printed between 1442 and 1454, is a tiny fragment of one leaf of a poem, in German, on the “World Judgment”; it is calculated, from this fragment, that the whole poem would have run to about seventy-four pages. There are fragments of various editions of a Latin grammar by Donatus. The earliest dated work (1454) is a Papal Indulgence, in several different issues; and there is a twelve-page leaflet, “A Warning to Christendom against the Turks”—timely in view of the fact that Constantinople had fallen the year before—concluding with the earliest printed New Year’s greeting, for the year 1455: “Eyn gut selig nuwe Jar.”

1455 proved to be a good but not a happy New Year for Gutenberg. It was a good year in that the printing of the Bible was finished. The text of the Bible is in Latin, in the version called the Vulgate, prepared by St. Jerome in the fourth century and in common use in the Roman Catholic Church. The version printed by Gutenberg was from a very accurate copy of the Paris revision, prepared by biblical scholars in the thirteenth century. (The Vulgate is still sometimes thought of as the “Roman Catholic Bible”; when Harry S. Truman took the oath of office as President of the United States in 1949, a peaceful balance was maintained by using two Bibles: a small English one for a Protestant Bible, and a facsimile of the Gutenberg Bible for a Catholic Bible.)

The printing of the Gutenberg Bible was indeed a mon-

rū. Et super reges sa mea
dor: in psalmis canēti
aut **Incipit Sophon**



ILLUMINATED INITIAL "V"
BEGINNING OF THE BOOK OF ZEPHANIAH
OLD TESTAMENT



ILLUMINATED INITIAL "E"
BEGINNING OF THE BOOK OF JOSHUA
OLD TESTAMENT

umental task. It was set in type which had been designed to imitate handwriting. There were several different forms of handwriting in use by copyists. The specific form of handwriting which was the model for the type of this book was, naturally enough, the one in common use in Western Germany in the middle of the fifteenth century, called gothic. The type based on it is called gothic, or black letter.

The type of the Gutenberg Bible was designed and cast for this job, and the text was composed in two columns to the page and forty-two lines to the column; hence it is sometimes called "the forty-two line Bible," though a few of the earlier pages set were in forty or forty-one lines. The complete Bible totals some 1,282 folio pages. At first, four compositors worked on it, then six; it is estimated that six compositors devoted two full years to typesetting alone. The printing began with one press, but soon six presses were in use; even so, it must have taken about two full years to see the sheets through the press. It is thought that something like one hundred and thirty-five copies were printed on paper, and forty copies on vellum. It must have been a good year for Gutenberg.

The reason that 1455 was not a happy year for Gutenberg was that his financial house of cards fell down. The amount of capital needed to produce the Bible was enormous. There was the large cost of tools, equipment, wages, and of the experimental work during the preceding decade or more. Moreover, the paper and vellum for the Bible alone would have been a big investment; it is estimated that more than 5,000 calfskins were required for the forty copies on vellum, and the equivalent of more than 50,000 sheets of paper $16\frac{1}{2} \times 12$ inches for the one hundred and thirty-five copies on paper. (The paper would, in practice, have presumably been in the form of some 25,000 sheets twice the size of the leaves of the book, with two pages being printed on each side and the sheet folded once before binding; thus were two leaves, or a total of four printed pages, created in folio from each

sheet of paper.) Of course all this material had to be bought and paid for a year or two before there was any possibility of a return from sales.

As a consequence, Gutenberg was not able to pay either the principle or the interest on his loans, and Johann Fust brought suit against him for an accumulated total debt of 2,026 guilders. Since Gutenberg had pledged his printing house equipment and supplies as security for the loan, Fust apparently took over the printing house and operated it himself in partnership with Peter Schoeffer, who seems to have been Gutenberg's foreman and who came to be related to Fust not only as a partner but (later) as son-in-law. It is presumed that the partnership of Fust and Schoeffer commenced before the printing of the Bible was quite complete. In any event, they went on later to produce other estimable books, most notably a beautiful Psalter of 1457, and another Bible in 1462.

The career of Gutenberg after the termination of his partnership with Fust is somewhat obscure. He may have been allowed to retain part of the earlier printing equipment. He was given a pension by the Archbishop of Mainz in 1465, and he died in obscurity in 1468, at the age of about sixty-nine.

But Gutenberg was not without honor in his own time. Among the many contemporary references to him as the inventor of printing, perhaps none is more rewarding than a letter by the Rector of the University of Paris, Professor Guillaume Fichet, written on December 31, 1470, and printed in 1471, just a couple of years after Gutenberg's death and only some fifteen years after the Bible was printed. (The fact that Fichet was writing in Latin may have loosed him from inhibitions and encouraged a freedom with superlatives, a freedom to be found in the Latin compositions of many Renaissance writers.) "Not far from the city of Mainz" he wrote, "there appeared a certain Johann whose surname was Gutenberg, who, first of all men, devised the art of printing, whereby books are made, not by a reed, as did the an-



ILLUMINATED INITIAL "P"

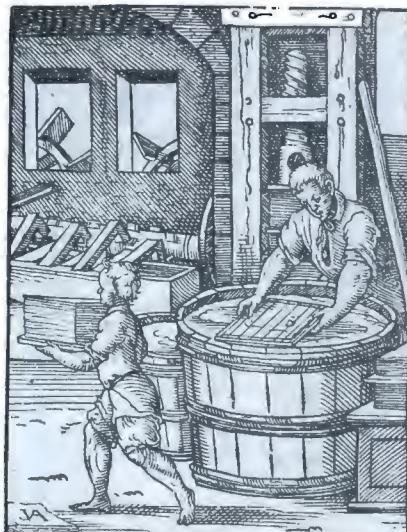
ILLUSTRATING KING SOLOMON TEACHING A CHILD

OLD TESTAMENT • BOOK OF PROVERBS

cients, nor with a quill pen, as do we, but with metal letters, and that swiftly, neatly, beautifully. Surely this man is worthy to be loaded with divine honors by all the Muses, all the arts, all the tongues of those who delight in books, and is all the more to be preferred to gods and goddesses in that he has put the means of choice within reach of letters themselves and of mortals devoted to culture. That great Gutenberg has discovered things far more pleasing and more divine, in carving out letters in such a fashion that whatever can be said or thought can by them be written down at once and transcribed and committed to the memory of posterity." The praise is deserved, and these comments can still stand as an epitome of the contribution of the invention of printing to the progress of learning.



PRINTING OFFICE



PAPERMAKER

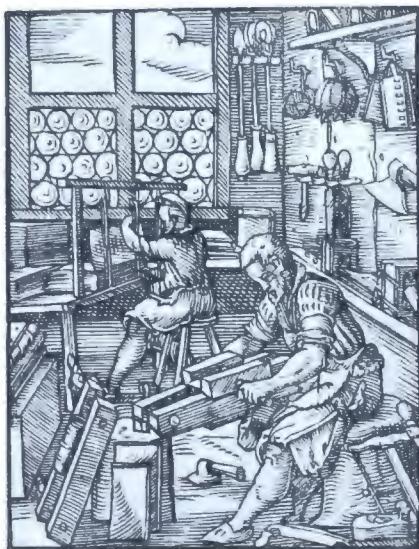
The illustrations on pages 32–33 are woodcuts made from drawings by Jost Amman. They are reproduced from a book by Hartmann Schopper, printed in Frankfurt in 1568. The methods here portrayed are thought to have been those followed, in general, for several hundred years after the invention of printing.

PRINTING OFFICE, 1568. The two men in the background are setting type (“composing”) by selecting the characters from the boxes (“the case”) in front of them. The two men in front are operating the printing press: the one on the left is removing a sheet of paper on which two pages have just been printed on one side; the one on the right is using circular pads (“balls”) with handles to ink the type for two pages. In the foreground, on the left there is a stack of sheets that have already been printed, and on the right a stack of blank sheets of paper.

PAPERMAKER, 1568. The man is dipping a frame or mold of interwoven wires into a vat of smooth pulp. He will raise it from the vat and shake out the water; the wet sheet will then be re-



TYPEFOUNDER



BOOKBINDER

moved from the mold, dried, and pressed. The boy is carrying a stack of finished sheets of paper. Parts of a water mill can be seen in the background; it was used in the process of washing, boiling, and beating linen rags until they became smooth pulp.

TYPEFOUNDER, 1568. The man is pouring molten metal into a mold to form the type. In front of him is a furnace with a fire inside and a bellows leaning against the wall. The metal (an alloy, with lead the main component) was melted on the top of the furnace. The face of the type was formed in a matrix which had been stamped with a hard metal punch.

BOOKBINDER, 1568. The man in the background is sewing together folded sheets that have been printed. The man in the foreground is trimming, with a plow, the uneven edges of a set of sewn sheets. In front of him is a bound book in a hand press. Various tools of the bookbinder's trade are hanging on the wall above the shelf on which there are other books in process.

platos. Herba sapientum sicut stimu-
lific quasi dani in altu defixi: que per
magistrorum oculum data sunt a pastore
uno. His amplius filii mihi ne requiras.
Facio plures libros nulli est sumo:
sequensq; meditatio. carnis afflictio
est. Sinen loquendi partem omnes audi-
amus. Deum time: et maledic eum obfua.
Hoc est omnis homo. Unde q; huius
adduxerat deus in iudicium pro omni
meato: sive bonum sive malum su-
mum. Enim etiam hercules. Canticum
Sauli me osculo o-
ris sui. Quia melio-
ra sunt ultra tua vi-
no: fragrania ungu-
cis optima. Oleum
essulsum nomine tuu:
ideo adolescentule dilectum te. Trahe
me post te. Lurcam in odore unguen-
torum tuorum. Introducat me rex in cella-
ria sua. Exultabim⁹ et letabim⁹ in te:
memorata uberi tuorum super viuu. Regi
diligunt te. Migrat suu sed formosa filie
ihesu salutem. sicut tabernacula cedar: si-
cuit palma salomonis. Nolite me con-
siderare typus fusa sum: q; a decolorauit
me sol. Filius matris mee pugnauit
contra me posuerat me custode viuis.
Hinc meam non custodivit. Indica
michi quem diligit anima mea. ubi pascas
ubi cutes in me die: ne ragari incipia
post gregem foliolum tuorum. Si ignoras
te o pulchritudine inter insulas: regredere
et ab ipso vestigia gregi: et pasci hys-
tuos iuxta tabernacula pastorum. Equi-
tanum nro i curibus pharaonis. Assimi-
lans te amica mea. Pulex sunt genit
nro sicut turritis: collum nro sicut mo-
nilia. Murmulas aureas faciemus
cibi: murmulatas argito. Si esset re i
accubitu suo: nardus mea dedit odorem

sum. Sicut cul⁹ mire diled⁹ me⁹ michi:
inter ubera mea comorabit⁹. Botrys
cipri diled⁹ meus michi: in vineis en-
gaddi. Ecce tu pulchra es amica mea:
ecce tu pulchra: oculi tui colubras. Ecce
tu pulchra es dilecta mi⁹ et decor⁹. Iudic⁹
noster florid⁹: signa domini nostri
ordina: laquearia nostra ciprellina.
Ago vos campi: et liliu con- II
vallum. Sicut liliu inter spinas:
sic amica mea inter filias. Sicut mal⁹
inter lunga siluaz: sic dilectus meus
inter filios. Sub umbra illius quem
desiderauerat sedi: et fructus eius dulcis
gutturi meo. Hunc duxit me rex in cella
vinaria: ordinavit in me caruamen.
Fulcite me floribz. Ripare me malis:
quia amore languo. Tua et sub ca-
pite meo: et delecta illius amplectebit
me. Ad uno vos filie ihesu salam: per
capreas rupes: rampas: ac subrupe-
nas: vigilare faciens dilectam: quia ad
usq; ipsa velit. Vox dilecti nra. Ecce
iste venit saliens in montibus: transilivis
colles. Similis est dilectus me⁹ caprea
hyrcanolog⁹: cervoz. En ipse stat post
parietem nostrum: et picea per forestrias:
prospicere per cancellos. En dilectus
meus loquit⁹ michi. Surge propera
amica mea: columba mea: formola
mea et veni. Jam enim hiamps transiit:
imber abiit et recessit. Flores apparue-
runt in terra: ipsa putacoris aduenit.
Vox turritis audita est in terra mea:
floris prouulit grossos fungs: viret flo-
rentes doctum odori sum. Surge pro-
pera amica mea speciosa et veni: co-
lumba mea in foraminibus petra in
cauana inacte. Osteide michi facie
tuu: sonat vox tua i auribus meo. Vox
tuum tua dulcis: et facies tua decora.
Capte nobis vulpo pacuulae: que



ILLUMINATED INITIAL "O"

BEGINNING OF THE SONG OF SOLOMON

OLD TESTAMENT

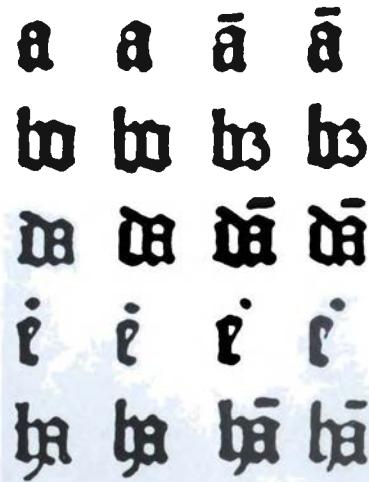
THE GUTENBERG BIBLE TODAY

THE SURVIVAL rate of copies of the Gutenberg Bible has been high. Today, more than five hundred years after publication, forty-eight copies are recorded: of these, thirty-six are printed on paper and twelve on vellum. If the estimate is correct that the total number originally printed was one hundred and seventy-five copies (one hundred and thirty-five on paper, forty on vellum), the overall survival rate is about one in four, or one in three for those on vellum. (There are, in addition, many fragments and separate leaves which are not usually counted as copies.) Some of these forty-eight copies are not complete, however. Two of the complete copies belonging to libraries in Germany, not seen since World War II, have recently reappeared in Russia. But to return to forty-eight, the total of the complete copies, the incomplete copies, and the missing copies. These are distributed around the world in the United States, Germany, Great Britain, France, Spain and Italy, Japan, Portugal, Switzerland, Austria, Denmark, Belgium, and Poland. Of the copies in the United States three are on vellum (two of them complete), at the Library of Congress, the Pierpont Morgan Library, and the Huntington; of the remaining copies on paper, only four are complete. The Huntington copy is the only copy on the west coast. (Our copy actually lacks two leaves, the last in each volume, which were supplied in facsimile before 1825.) The first copy to come to this country was bought for \$2,600 at auction in London on March 13, 1847, for James Lenox of New York; that copy, on paper, is now in the New York Public Library.

Copies do move around occasionally, though it would take both a great deal of patience and money to get a copy. Since the

Huntington copy was acquired in 1911, a number of copies have changed hands (most recently in 1987); all but two or three have found their way into institutional libraries, either by gift or purchase, and presumably the other private copies are in due course destined for institutional ownership. Many copies have been in libraries for centuries; the University of Leipzig, for example, has had its copy since at least 1543. Originally, most of the copies were housed, presumably, in the libraries of monasteries, churches, and ecclesiastical bodies. A copy now in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris belonged, as early as 1457, to the church in Ostheim; it is also distinguished by being inscribed with the earliest date that appears on any copy—24 August 1456 on the first volume and 15 August 1456 on the second volume, the dates on which the rubricator (Henricus Cremer) completed his work.

The Huntington copy, which includes both the Old and the New Testaments, is one of the twelve copies on vellum known to exist. It is imposing in physical appearance: it is bound in two massive volumes; together, they weigh fifty-three and a quarter pounds, suitable for the weightiness of the contents. Ours is one of nine copies recorded as being in fifteenth-century bindings. The wooden boards in the binding of our copy are thought to be part of the original, uniform binding of the two volumes done between 1455 and 1460, though the leather covering the boards was renewed in the early sixteenth century. The covers are stamped with a design, and early index tabs (in faded red) are attached to leaves beginning the several books of the Bible to indicate their location. Somewhat later, metal clasps were added to keep each volume closed, and



BLACK LETTER TYPE
OF THE GUTENBERG BIBLE

*Laudit equos . uoc
ræueniunt , timid
icta dies aderat .
radiuoq; pecus . n
allet . et armatos /
amq; suos circum
unduntur mixti .*

STATIUS'S SYLVARUM
LIBRI QUINTA PRINTED IN
VENICE IN 1502.

An early use of italic type.

*pensa funiculo c
um allio crudo si
llūt. Atq; in totu
uertigines. Item
cis iniecta: et mo
rpentium ictus u
bus occurrit. Alb
nē sacrū. Sine ole*

PLINY'S NATURAL HISTORY,
PRINTED IN LATIN BY NICHOLAS JENSEN
IN 1472 IN VENICE.

An early use of roman type.

metal bosses were attached to the outside of the covers to protect them from wear and damage.

The leaves of our copy are exceedingly bright. The vellum has hardly darkened, even with the passage of more than five centuries, and the ink used for the text is still glossy black. The gothic (or black letter) type is clear, and as legible as such type can be for those who did not early in life come to terms with German script. Several variations of gothic type soon developed, and within the first half century of printing the two other major families of early type—roman and italic—were created. The sample passages reproduced on these pages show how the type of the Gutenberg Bible compares with the type of other famous books that came after it.



ILLUMINATED INITIAL "L"

ILLUSTRATING AN OX, THE SYMBOL OF LUKE

NEW TESTAMENT • PROLOGUE TO THE BOOK OF LUKE

When the Gutenberg Bible had been printed, the sheets were handed over (much as was the case with manuscripts) to specialists who added the decoration by hand. The rubricator did the pen ornamentation in colored ink (particularly red and blue), the illuminator added the gold work and either the illuminator or another artist did the paintings in the margins and in the initial letters. The decorations shine with such rich colors that one can hardly believe they were applied soon after the book was printed and have never since been touched up. The predominant colors are red, blue, and gold. The page headings, the chapter numbers, the chapter initials, and the large initials are in color.

At the beginning of each of the books of the Bible, there is usually an elaborate decoration in color in a margin, with leaves, sprays, birds, animals, and illustrative drawings. Sometimes a

margin is full of drawings, as is the inner margin of the first page of the Book of Genesis, which is shown on page 16: God is at the top, in the act of creation; in the panel below are some of the works of creation, the fish of the sea on the fifth day and the beasts of the earth on the sixth day, with the creation of Eve out of Adam as the last act shown. This reproduction deserves, and will repay, careful scrutiny of its details and of its total effect. It is only about one quarter the size of the original, but even so it gives a reasonable idea of this magnificent book. The leaves of the Huntington copy measure about 16 $\frac{1}{4}$ " tall and 12" wide; it is one of four (the others being in Rome, Tübingen, and Leipzig) that are the largest of all known copies. It is also remarkable for the many marks and smudges on the pages from the process of printing, including fingerprints which may belong to Gutenberg himself.

Most of the books of the Bible have a small drawing in the large initial letter with which the book commences. Job is portrayed with a dog licking his sores, Daniel with toothy lions on either side of him, and the Psalms begin with a picture of King David playing on his harp.

There are many notable decorations in the Huntington copy of the Gutenberg Bible. There is, for example, a hunting scene in which two dogs are chasing their prey all across one lower margin. In the bottom margin of the Book of Proverbs, a peacock has his magnificent tail spread into the shape of a full fan, while a nearby insect—a bee, perhaps—edges toward an open flower. In the left margin beside the Song of Solomon, five different kinds of birds are posed for their portraits on a gracefully stylized branch which has four varieties of flowers. The decorations throughout both volumes are splendid examples of medieval art.



ILLUMINATED INITIAL "P"
 AND MARGINAL DECORATIONS
 BEGINNING OF THE BOOK OF PROVERBS
 OLD TESTAMENT

**HENRY E. HUNTINGTON'S
COPY OF THE GUTENBERG BIBLE**

LITTLE IS known about the early history of the Huntington Bible, other than that an early owner was a member of the Nostitz family of Leipzig, Germany, where the illumination and binding were executed. Mr. Huntington's copy of the Gutenberg Bible was acquired in 1911, in a dramatic way and with fascinating consequences.

This copy had been the property of an important New York collector, Robert Hoe. He had bought it in 1898, in great secrecy, from the London dealer, Bernard Quaritch. Hoe sent a hand-written letter (which is in our collection) to Quaritch offering to buy it; he was very apologetic, however, because he already owned a copy on paper. "It seems absurd," he wrote, "for me to have two copies of so expensive a book, but I would like to own the Vellum Copy." (This is the true collector's instinct in action.) "Is there any way," he said, "of getting it here without any one knowing I had it?" Nobody: not even the Quaritch employees. There was, and he got it, for \$25,000.

This book was the chief item in the Hoe Sale, which took place in the Anderson Galleries in New York, in April 1911, after the death of Robert Hoe. The sale catalog tempted all collectors with the following words, in full capitals: "**IT IS THEREFORE PROBABLE THAT NO OTHER OPPORTUNITY WILL EVER OCCUR TO OBTAIN A VELLUM COPY OF THIS MONUMENTAL WORK, THE FIRST IMPORTANT BOOK PRINTED FROM MOVABLE TYPE.**" On Monday evening, April 24, the sales room was crowded with dealers and collectors. The most notable European dealers were present, including the Bernard Quaritch whose father had sold the Bible to Hoe. The auctioneer, Sidney Hodgson, was brought from

London to handle the sale. Joseph Widener, a wealthy collector from Philadelphia, was sitting in the middle of the front row; the firm of Dodd & Livingston was ready for heavy action; and George D. Smith, the dealer who was to bid for Henry E. Huntington, was in place with Huntington at his side.

The crowd was tense with excitement, and applause rippled through the room when the Gutenberg Bible was announced by the auctioneer in his clipped British accent. He asked for an opening bid, and a wag in the back of the room said, "A hundred dollars." Nervous laughter. Dodd & Livingston started the auction at \$10,000, and the bidding moved quickly to \$31,000, where that firm dropped out. Quaritch's last bid was \$33,000. Only Widener and Smith were left. At \$41,000, they began to move by five hundreds, and then by two hundreds. Then Smith increased the pace and said "\$46,000." "\$47,000," replied Widener. "\$48,000," countered Smith. There was a perceptible pause, and then Widener said "\$49,000." "\$50,000," immediately replied Smith, and there was no answer. The auctioneer raised his hammer, held it a moment, and then let it fall. The audience broke into spontaneous applause, so prolonged that A. Edward Newton (a collector who was present) later wrote of it as one of the great moments he had experienced in the auction rooms.

"Let's see the purchaser! Let him stand up," someone shouted, Smith stood up, Widener slipped out of the room almost unobserved, and it was announced that Huntington was the purchaser. Many of those present felt that they were witnessing an epochal event: the highest price ever given for any book ever sold at auction, the unbelievable sum of \$50,000, and the national pride of having the event take place in New York with an American as the purchaser.

Not everyone was pleased, however. Some of the European dealers were disgruntled at their lack of success in the sale, and J. P. Morgan's librarian, Miss Belle da Costa Greene, "left the auction room in a huff," according to the newspapers. The prices,



ILLUMINATED INITIAL "O"
BEGINNING OF THE BOOK OF NAHUM
OLD TESTAMENT



ILLUMINATED INITIAL "P"
BEGINNING OF THE BOOK OF JUDGES
OLD TESTAMENT

she declared, "are perfectly ridiculous. They are more than ridiculous—they are most harmful. They establish a dangerous precedent." "The Hoe collection is being sold practically en bloc," she said, to the same man who bought the Gutenberg Bible. "It has hardly been an auction at all," she fumed. "Buyers have come from all over Europe and are getting nothing."

The great news of the sale of the Gutenberg Bible was carried in hundreds of newspapers throughout the United States, from Burlington, Vermont to Phoenix, Arizona, from Birmingham, Alabama to Muncie, Indiana to Denver, Colorado. The typical story ran about six inches and began with an awed declaration of the price; it told a little about the book, a little about Huntington, and made some mention of other early books of interest. It is hard to imagine any bookish event that would today command that kind of attention in what are now styled the public media.

It is even harder to imagine the kind of attention that the sale gained on the editorial pages. It is astonishing that there were, in the course of a few weeks after the sale, just about as many editorials as there had been news stories, and the editorials tended to be longer. There seem to have been more moralists than book collectors among those editorial writers. Almost all of them dwelt on the price, and there was about an equal distribution of sweet and sour in their opinions. One declared, with more hope than logic, that "When Bibles sell for \$50,000 it can't be said that Christianity is on the wane." The Louisville *Courier-Journal* sourly asserted that the sum was paid simply "for the gratification of vanity. . . . From the Gutenberg Bible Mr. Huntington can derive not a whit more artistic, literary or spiritual pleasure than he could get from a 50-cent edition or even from a free copy which any kindly-disposed Christian would cheerfully give him."

The San Francisco *Star* condemned the purchase as an anti-humanitarian act, saying that "one empty stomach is of more moment to humanity than many Gutenberg Bibles," but the Chico, California *Enterprise* found a ray of hope, saying that

"Henry E. Huntington will squeeze half way through the needle's eye if the Lord will let him. The day after he paid \$50,000 for the Gutenberg Bible he donated \$25,000 to the half million dollar Y.M.C.A. fund."

Huntington's newspaper clipping service dutifully supplied him with this vast quantity of clippings, which we still have. We also still have the avalanche of personal letters that descended on him, and to read them (as I have done) is to become aware of the fact that there are many people out there who have pen in hand, eager to write. In this case, everybody had something to sell. I hope that the flavor will come through from one or two brief examples. From the Comfort Sanitary Poultry Farm—"Texas' Largest Baby-chick Hatchery"—in Comfort, Kendall County, Texas, this short classic: "I read in the paper that you are the buyer of that Gutenberg Bible and having in possession an old Bible myself I am asking the favor from you to let me know how I can find out what my bible is worth. It might be I will sell it. The book was printed in 1747 and is bound in hog skin." (It ought to last.) Bibles without number were offered, some having belonged to a grandfather, all "very valuable." He was offered sundry other books, including Pilgrim's Progress in Welsh, six French books printed in 1812, an 1822 volume on dentistry, the 1816 memoirs of James Wilkinson, a Confederate bond, the writings of Josephus, the sermons of John Boys, and a copy of Cowper's poems sent from England with 32 cent postage due. He was also offered a harpsichord, an old leather head rest, a gentleman's inlaid shaving mirror, a pair of antlers "beautifully mounted," an Old English thermometer—once the property of Beowulf, perhaps—a silver watch with Columbus' ships painted on the face, and about a thousand other objects of vertu.

One letter, from Alexander, Kansas, was addressed to Huntington "c/o the late Collis P. Huntington, New York City, New York." Collis had been dead for eleven years, but the letter was delivered—though not, I believe, by the routing called for in the address.

gloriā passionis.
Incepit liber primus.



psfarū ⁊ medoꝝ. dicit
et obtinuit omnīū ⁊
perfecit reges terre. E

ILLUMINATED INITIAL "E"
BEGINNING OF THE BOOK OF MACCABEES
OLD TESTAMENT • APOCRYPHA

Another letter came direct from Tucson, Arizona, from a friend named Epes Randolph. "Dear Mr. Huntington: I have known for many years that you were sadly in need of the influence imparted by a constant use of Holy Writ, but I did not suppose that on short notice you would feel the need of \$50,000 worth of it 'in a bunch.'"

Huntington replied, "My dear Randolph: I certainly should not have paid \$50,000 for that Bible if I had not needed it very much, although, as a matter of fact, I found after I had purchased it that I could buy one for 10 cents, the contents of which would probably have done me as much good as the one I have, so you can imagine how chagrined I felt that I had paid \$50,000 for one."

In fact, he was not chagrined at all. The Gutenberg Bible gave him intense pleasure, and he delighted in looking at it, in thinking about what it stands for, and in showing it to his guests. It continues to be a delight to visitors, and it is perhaps a greater attraction than is any other single book in the Library.

It is truly a monumental work, a landmark in learning. It deserves our attention and our respect as a worthy symbol of a revolution in our intellectual life.



ILLUMINATED INITIAL "H"

ILLUSTRATING AN EAGLE, THE SYMBOL OF JOHN

NEW TESTAMENT • PROLOGUE TO THE BOOK OF JOHN